

“Professional” Local Government Managers Practices That Add Value

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Here is a roster of practices that define the skills, commitments and goals of local government professional administrators.

1. Professionals add value to the quality of public policy and produce results that matter to their communities.

Local government professionals are directed by and work in partnership with elected officials to develop sound approaches to meeting community aspirations and solving problems. Efficiently and effectively, they produce results that matter. Professionals believe they should offer a balanced assessment of policy options in pursuit of the public interest. While politically aware, they shy away from becoming politically aligned as they assist elected officials in fulfilling their policy-making role. Professional managers bring their knowledge of performance management and a government-wide perspective to the successful stewardship of public assets and resources; they pursue quality and transparency in the design and delivery of public services.

2. Professionals take a long-term and community-wide perspective.

Local government professionals are most effective when guided by long-term community plans that establish a framework for policy formulation and goal setting. Local government professionals are well positioned to bring a community-wide perspective to policy discussions. They strive to connect past and future while focusing on the present. They are committed to serving the interest of the entire community while respecting the interests of all of its components.

3. Professionals commit themselves to ethical practices in the service of public values.

A reform tradition and a professional association support and foster ethical conduct. Members of ICMA are accountable to ethical principles put forth by the Association, its Code of Ethics, and its Declaration of Ideals. It is through commitment to a higher set of ideals that professional managers “affirm the dignity and worth of the services rendered by government and maintain . . . a deep sense of social responsibility as a trusted public servant.”

4. Professionals help build community and support democratic and community values.

Professional managers help build community by facilitating partnerships among sectors, groups and individuals. They work with informal groups of people as well as established groups, organizations and other governing institutions. Local government professionals – through their values, training and experience – support democratic values and work effectively toward inclusion, accountability and transparency. Developing effective partnerships with elected officials and generating community engagement are as important as the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery in helping to build a sense of community.

5. Professionals promote equitable, fair outcomes and processes.

Professional managers have an obligation to promote equity and fairness. They seek to ensure that services are fairly distributed and that both the design and the implementation of administrative processes avoid favoritism.

6. Professionals develop and sustain organizational excellence and promote innovation.

Professional administrative leaders relentlessly focus on efficient and equitable service delivery, policy implementation and evaluation. Administrative systems are aligned with values, mission and policy goals created and/or legitimized by elected officials and community. Excellent organizations produce information that informs public deliberation and policy making and that supports both qualitative and quantitative measures of performance.

Highly trained professionals – hired on the basis of merit and committed to professional development for all employees – promote innovation while valuing consistency and continuity, and strive continuously to strengthen organizational capacity to produce results that matter.